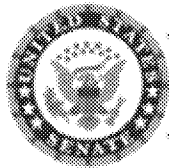


**From:** Konkus, John [konkus.john@epa.gov]  
**Sent:** 1/18/2019 5:03:05 PM  
**To:** Stepp, Cathy [stepp.cathy@epa.gov]; Thiede, Kurt [thiede.kurt@epa.gov]; Wehrum, Bill [Wehrum.Bill@epa.gov]; Woods, Clint [woods.clint@epa.gov]  
**CC:** Jackson, Ryan [jackson.ryan@epa.gov]  
**Subject:** Duckworth, Carper and Durbin Request Immediate Investigation into Allegations of Misconduct at EPA

R5 & OAR: we are starting to get inquiries (AP and WaPo thus far) on this press release below. Our response is the same one that we worked up together on Wednesday FYI.



## UNITED STATES SENATE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 18, 2019

Contact: Sean Savett (Duckworth), [Sean\\_Savett@duckworth.senate.gov](mailto:Sean_Savett@duckworth.senate.gov)

Jill Farquharson (EPW/Carper), [Jill\\_Farquharson@epw.senate.gov](mailto:Jill_Farquharson@epw.senate.gov)

Emily Hampsten (Durbin), [Emily\\_Hampsten@durbin.senate.gov](mailto:Emily_Hampsten@durbin.senate.gov)

### **Duckworth, Carper and Durbin Request Immediate Investigation into Allegations of Misconduct at EPA**

*Senators ask for independent investigation into allegations that EPA senior political appointees ordered staff to not inspect facilities that release cancer-causing emissions of ethylene oxide*

[WASHINGTON, D.C.] – U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Tom Carper (D-DE), and Dick Durbin (D-IL) asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) to immediately launch an independent investigation into a serious allegation that the Trump EPA is failing to protect the American public from cancer-causing emissions of Ethylene Oxide (EtO). Duckworth's staff received information this week alleging that EPA senior political appointees instructed career civil servants to avoid conducting inspections of facilities that emit EtO, a known carcinogen, in Region 5. Duckworth is the top Democrat on the Senate Subcommittee on Fisheries, Waters and Wildlife and Carper is the top Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

**“We urge the EPA OIG to swiftly begin a thorough independent investigation into allegations that senior EPA political appointees instructed or impeded investigations of facilities that emit EtO,”** the Senators wrote. **“Americans rely on EPA to protect them from public threats posed by contaminated air and water. The allegation that EPA may be preventing its personnel from carrying out this critical mission as a result of politically-motivated interference is disturbing and must be investigated to determine the truth.”**

Duckworth questioned [\[duckworth.senate.gov\]](http://duckworth.senate.gov) EPA Administrator nominee Andrew Wheeler during his Senate confirmation hearing this week over this report – and to answer for why no EPA staff are currently inspecting any facilities that emit ethylene oxide in Region 5 or across the country. Video of Duckworth and Wheeler's exchange at the committee hearing is available [here \[duckworth.senate.gov\]](http://duckworth.senate.gov).

Duckworth and Durbin have been [strong advocates \[duckworth.senate.gov\]](http://duckworth.senate.gov) for residents in Illinois communities with EtO-emitting facilities like Sterigenics and Medline and they have repeatedly [called for the EPA \[duckworth.senate.gov\]](http://duckworth.senate.gov) to update its safety standards that regulate emissions of the carcinogen. Duckworth and

Durbin have had multiple meetings with top EPA officials over this public health crisis and EPA has held community meetings and begun monitoring air quality near Sterigenics at Duckworth and Durbin's request. The Senators have previously requested an investigation [durbin.senate.gov] into whether EPA intentionally withheld critical health information from the public about the cancer risks posed by Sterigenics.

The full text of the letter is available below and online **here [duckworth.senate.gov]**.

Dear Acting Inspector General Sheehan:

We write to request that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) immediately initiate an independent investigation into a serious allegation of misconduct involving failure to protect public health. Senator Duckworth's staff recently received information alleging that EPA senior political appointees instructed career civil servants to avoid conducting inspections in Region 5 of facilities that emit Ethylene Oxide (EtO), a known carcinogen.

A review of public source reporting from EPA's official website appears to confirm EPA has failed to conduct inspections of EtO emitting facilities over the past six months across Region 5 and the Country, despite recent incidents involving dangerous exposure to this carcinogenic chemical. This fact pattern is concerning in and of itself. However, if the lax inspection and enforcement activity is a result of politically-motivated interference overriding recommendations of career staff, that would elevate our concerns from simple poor performance to potential outright misconduct by political appointees.

Accordingly, we urge the EPA OIG to swiftly begin a thorough independent investigation into allegations that senior EPA political appointees instructed or impeded investigations of facilities that emit EtO. Americans rely on EPA to protect them from public threats posed by contaminated air and water. The allegation that EPA may be preventing its personnel from carrying out this critical mission is disturbing and must be investigated to determine the truth, and if necessary, identify corrective actions.

Sincerely,

Tammy Duckworth  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on  
Fisheries, Water and Wildlife

Tom Carper  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on  
Environment and Public Works

Richard J. Durbin  
Democratic Whip  
United States Senate